14.   A method for sequencing a plurality of tasks performed or controlled by a computer comprising:

    a)   displaying on a computer display a user interface having a directional field;

    b)   placing in response to user input, task objects in said directional field, wherein said task objects represent the tasks to be performed by said computer;

    c)   selecting, by a user, a directional attribute for said directional field;

    d)   sequencing, by said computer, of one or more of the task objects in the directional field based on the relative spatial location of the task objects in the directional field and the directional attribute of the directional field.

Please amend claim 31 as follows:

31.   The sequencing method of claim 29 further including the step of selecting a directional attribute for the directional field by a user.

Remarks

The telephone interview granted by the Examiner on July 13, 2000 is appreciated. In light of this interview, claims 1, 14, and 31 have been amended to clarify one of the issues discussed during the interview. In particular, the amendments clarify that the directional attribute is changeable by a user. During the interview, the Examiner indicated that the phrase "changeable directional attribute" could be construed to mean that the directional attribute is changeable by the programmer. It was pointed out to the Examiner that the specification clearly describes the directional attribute as being changeable by the user. Also, the response dated December 21, 1999 filed by Applicant specifically refers to the directional attribute as "a user-changeable directional attribute."

In the Office Action dated March 13, 2000, the Examiner chose not to directly address Applicant's argument that the prior art does not teach or suggest a user-changeable directional attribute. Instead, the Examiner chose to interpret the term "changeable" in a manner not intended by Applicant. That is, the Examiner contends that the term "changeable" should be construed to mean changeable by the programmer. Applicant contends that this construction of the term "changeable" is not reasonable since this interpretation automatically renders every aspect of a program changeable. That is, it is inherent that any aspect of a computer program can be changed by rewriting the underlying code for the program. However, the claimed invention is for a user application. From a user's standpoint, features which are hard-coated in the program are not changeable.

In the telephone interview on July 13, 2000, the issue of the proper construction of the term "changeable" was discussed. The Examiner reiterated his position that the term "changeable" should be construed to mean changeable by the programmer. It was suggested that the claims be amended to explicitly state that the directional attribute is "user-changeable." There was also some discussion about the patentability of the claims with the limitation that the directional attribute is changeable by the user. Although the art cited by the Examiner does not teach or suggest a user-changeable directional attribute, the Examiner was non-committal regarding the patentability of the claims with this additional limitation. On the contrary, the Examiner seemed to suggest that such a claim would not be patentable.
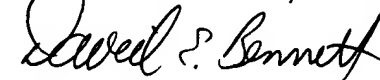
Since the interview with the Examiner was not encouraging, Applicant is filing a Notice of Appeal simultaneously with this response. The amendments to the claims are made in order to narrow the issues on appeal. In the absence of these amendments, an issue would exist regarding the proper interpretation of the term "changeable." To simplify the arguments for appeal, Applicant has amended the claims to expressly state that the directional attribute is "user-changeable." This will allow the arguments to be focused on the issue whether the

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sequencing method for a computer employing a directional field with a user-changeable directional attribute is patentable. Since the amendment narrows the issues on appeal, the amendment should be allowed. Additionally, the amendment should be allowed because it promotes economy of administration. The question of whether a sequencing method using a directional field with a user-changeable attribute is patentable is not new, but has been effectively evaded by the Examiner by his claim construction. Addressing the issue now on this appeal will avoid further examination and further appeals. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the amendment should be entered.

Respectfully submitted,

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